

SAN FRANCISCO ART ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

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SEE! MY COUNTRY HOUSE—From the collection of lithographs by Honoré Daumier
Now showing, San Francisco Museum of Art

Art—A Revelation, Not an Argument

By RAY BOYNTON

ART is so peculiarly personal in its origins and in the reactions which it engenders that it is difficult to lay down rules either for its production or for its understanding. Sensibility plays so important a part, both in its creation and in its appreciation, that any dogmatic approach in either case is sure to be a handicap, almost inevitably wrong. It is difficult to arrive at conclusions at any time that will not have to be almost immediately revised.

We all fall under the necessity of organizing our ideas in order to find a method of presenting them either in the field of teaching and criticism or in the field of performance. The necessity seems to be even greater in the field of teaching,

and this leads to a fundamental weakness of teaching—the habit of dogmatizing—of reducing the problem to a formula easily taught. The surest and most infallible formula is the one most sought after. These formulae usually take on the character of a precise way of doing things which is easily rationalized and may at times be right but presently becomes stereotyped and inflexible as habit. The mechanics of the process, the means, becomes more important than the end. The result may not always be wrong, but the student with imagination will always be the first one to rebel and be penalized.

To bring any order into the problems, either of creative effort or teaching, it is necessary to

find a method and to organize effort with a logic that is comprehensive. It is necessary to search for generalizations and at the same time to avoid dogmatic attitudes. There are generalizations that seem to me to have fundamental application. Most rules or laws do not have dogma and most controversy arises over the latter. It is necessary to distinguish.

The plastic arts are a continual search after order and sequence in form. Movement of form is the perpetual concern of the artist and all of the implications of movement follow—tempo, scale, equilibrium, spacial relations. This is not merely a matter of mechanics but of the fundamental language. Mastery of the mechanics of form leads to fullness of expression and it becomes a mode capable of revealing the whole gamut of nobility, splendor, force, delicacy, candor, in the degree in which the individual is sensitive to these qualities.

The sensibilities are so influenced by external realities that the language of form necessarily derives from them, and one may say that realism as a method has never been superseded in the plastic arts. All aspects of rhythm are apprehended through the senses and all aspects of movement are legitimate concern for study and appreciation. Sensual awareness is an indispensable equipment of the artist; intellectual awareness lends force and timeliness to his efforts, but physical awareness is that part of his equipment without which he becomes merely an imitator, or is entirely inarticulate.

The laws and rules by which these things are arrived at are another matter. I believe that realism has never receded in importance as a method of profound realization in the arts. In work of great power and sensitiveness from all times and places we are confronted with it. But the realism asserted with great authority by the academicians of the 19th century was a cheap and shallow thing, substituting the values of the camera and the scientist for the selective values of the artist. The scientific viewpoint so dominated the period and the camera gave the artist such a sense of inferiority that the result was an appalling parade of dull facts, an assertion of realism as an end in itself instead of a means. This contributed much toward bringing the whole idea of realism into disrepute in the last generation.

One of the perfect examples of dogma which is almost always wrong is found in the teaching of color theories. There the reduction to formula is an open temptation to tired teachers. I do not refer to rational deductions based on observation of the mechanics of color in different combinations, but to the elaborations on the spectrum that obtrude themselves into color theory. Nearly

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The Federal Art Project

By JOSEPH A. DANYSH

The principal aim of the Federal Art Project, as stated by Holger Cahill, National Director, is "to work toward an integration of the arts with the daily life of the community and an integration of the fine and the practical arts."

The work of the project falls roughly into two main categories: (1) creative, and (2) visual education.

Although there is a good deal of overlapping of these aims, the first covers approximately the work of the Central Easel Project, the Sculpture Project, the Mural and Mural Planning Projects, and much of the work of the Lithographic Project.

The purposes of these creative projects are to conserve the talents and abilities of artists who, for lack of means to continue their work, are in danger of losing these talents or at least of having them impaired through disuse; to rehabilitate by restoring self-respect; to secure for the public outstanding examples of contemporary American art.

The Central Easel Project employs 27 artists in the Bay Area at the present time. They have produced, to date, approximately 93 water-colors and 26 oil paintings, which, after being exhibited to interested groups both locally and nationally, will eventually be placed in tax-supported institutions, mostly schools and museums.

The outstanding work of the Sculpture Project, which employs eight artists and craftsmen, is a 12-foot statue in stainless steel and granite, of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, preliminary designs for which have been approved by the Art Commission and the Park Commission. When completed this figure will be placed in the Chinese Park in Chinatown. Other prospects are a 20-foot granite figure of a "Mother of the Races," a life-size figure in stone of Pasteur, and various works in metal, wood and ceramics.

The Mural Project employs, at the present time, 37 artists. Nine murals and mosaics are in progress and 13 more have been planned. The mosaics are of particular interest as, although mosaic is a true mural medium and one especially adapted to present-day artistic stan-

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Tea at Art School

The faculty and students of the California School of Fine Arts invite the members of the San Francisco Art Association and their friends to a reception and tea in honor of the opening of the Exhibition of Students' Work on Friday afternoon, May 15th, at the California School of Fine Arts.

The Exhibition of Japanese Art at Mills College

By DR. ALFRED SALMONY

To exhibit means to select. It means to try to realize a program. Few art complexes have as many branches as Japanese art. The Exhibition of the Friends of Far Eastern Art recently held in the Art Gallery of Mills College displayed the high standard of American collections. Just as with the Chinese Exhibition of 1934, museums and private collectors gave their heartiest co-operation. The emphasis of this exhibition was on the earliest art manifestations.

On account of the manifold aspects of Japanese art it seemed impossible to display it in one large hall. Consequently the Art Gallery of Mills College was divided by movable partitions into four compartments which, in a discreet way, suggested the position of art objects in a temple or in a private house. Religious sculpture stood on a platform; secular paintings hung in alcoves; screens were unfolded on a dado.

As a novelty the enterprise of the Friends of Far Eastern Art included prehistory on a large scale. Since modern art has helped to discover the expressive works of primitive humanity such a procedure does not need an excuse. Pottery utensils and idols of the stone age (loaned by the Louvre Museum of Paris) appear strangely sophisticated. The applied and engraved spiral ornaments certainly had a symbolical meaning. Pottery figurines which once surrounded the funeral mound and bronze mirrors and bells which had been used to accompany the corpse to the grave were fine representations from the metal age.

A long series of large Buddhist sculpture proves that Japanese art was by no means without a monumental spirit. But the leading medium of this religious art was not stone, as in China, but wood even more than bronze. The whole pantheon of Buddhist religion appears—the quiet and concentrated Buddha, the smiling Bosatsu or saint, the armor-clad warrior guardians—these illustrate the development from an architectural conception to a more naturalistic, later to an almost baroque, and finally to a refined conception. The torso of a wooden guardian belongs to the most impressive examples of the early monumental sculpture.

Religious paintings in the service of Buddhism appeared no less impressive. There are standardized types illustrating scenes and holy assemblies which were created in the earlier periods and manufactured mechanically throughout later periods. Some of the earliest examples outside of Japan give an idea of the treatment of such subjects when still in the hands of a creative artist. The climax and at the same time the end of vital religious work is the idealistic portrait of



FRAGMENT—WOOD SCULPTURE
Middle 9th Century—Shown at Mills College
From Fuller Collection

a Chinese sage by the Japanese priest-painter, Cho Densu. This can be dated in the first half of the 15th century. In this century the creative interest moves to simplified subjects mainly in black and white, such as landscapes, priest portraits, and even isolated flowers or animals. This spirit, directed towards simplification and concentration, is also responsible for the most important group of pottery. Few people realize how much modern pottery has been influenced by Japanese and Chinese prototypes.

Various schools of paintings which followed in the 16th century included splendid decoration in screens, interest in life in the historical hand-scrolls, and finally, after 1650, the apotheosis of the beautiful tea-house girl and the actor.

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San Francisco Art Association Bulletin

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Bulletin Editor.....MILDRED ROSENTHAL
Associates.....RALPH STACKPOLE, WILLIAM HESTHAL
RAY BOYNTON, MARIAN HARTWELL
Business Manager.....PLATT KENT

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Chestnut and Jones Streets, by 20th of each month.

The BULLETIN congratulates Dr. Heil and the directors of the Palace of the Legion of Honor on the Van Gogh Exhibition, now on display.

An analysis, by Gertrude Partington Albright, will appear in the June issue of this BULLETIN.

The Auction

It will be some time before the hurt occasioned by the recent auction of artists' work, held at the Art School, is healed. It was another of those unfortunate episodes that occur so often in the lives of artists and which could easily be averted by careful planning and cooperation.

The gallery of the Art School was filled with artists, who alone seemed to appreciate the many little gems that had been donated for the sale. Our board of directors was conspicuous by its absence and Mrs. Angus Boggs played her usual rôle of representing the buying public.

It would have been as well for the artists to present their work to their few constant backers as a mark of their affection, and far better and wiser for them to have made exchanges amongst themselves rather than to purchase the efforts of fellow workers at prices so unjustifiable as to become embarrassing. The "cost" of handling the affair did not vindicate the sacrifice!

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This long way is accompanied by the very many so-called industrial arts, such as the technically refined porcelain, the masculine iron sword-guards (not to be confused with the later jewelry-like type), the playful netsukes in wood and ivory, the delicate lacquer-work with variegated inlay, and the glamorous costumes for the dance.

The exhibition climaxed with the wood-block prints of Japan. Although no other phase of Japanese art is better known in the West, it is in these that the visitor found his greatest surprise. Instead of the many landscapes of the great 19th century masters, most of the space available was given to the monumental figures portraying actors in female rôles. Early or late, the quality of print is unsurpassable and brought home, probably for the first time, a realization of the height to which this art rose.

NOTE: A selection from the exhibition at Mills College of Japanese prints, screens and paintings will be on view at the San Francisco Museum of Art, beginning May 10th.

The Federal Art Project

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dards and requirements, it has been grossly neglected in American art. By the use of domestic tile it has been found possible to produce mural decorations of great and lasting beauty at a fraction of the cost of the commercial ventures of the past in this medium.

The Lithograph Project is providing what is, for most of the artists participating, a new and stimulating medium and is developing a new and wider commercial market for the work of these artists. The Lithograph Project employs directly 13 artists and is reproducing the work of many artists scattered from Los Angeles to Sacramento. To date 82 sets of black-and-white, two of color process, and four of hand-colored prints have been completed.

On the side of visual education the Lithograph Project is printing and compiling several valuable series of prints, including a set of color reproductions of the ancient petroglyphs found in the caves of California, a set of hand-colored wild flower plates, and two sets of *Commedia del Arte* costume plates.

Through the services in applied art aid is being given to various campaigns of social value. The Poster Project has turned out striking and effective safety and health posters. The Central Photographic Project, besides aiding in this type of work, is compiling a complete visual record of the work being done by nearly all the federal projects functioning in this area. A group of artists working with the National Parks Service is producing an interesting and valuable series of charts, drawings, diagrams and photographs giving a visual history of California's redwoods, as well as educational and conservational material for use in our national and state parks and forests. A scale model of the San Francisco Mills Field Airport has been completed which provides the public with a better visualization of what the finished project will be like than that obtained by the engineers and architects. Other groups, working with the State Bureau of Entomology and the Forest Range and Experimental Station at Berkeley, are rendering valuable aid in the campaigns to protect our forests from fire and insect enemies. A research group, local unit in the national project of compiling an Index of American Design, is doing notable pioneer work in clarifying the native background in the arts.

In a report of this length there are necessarily many omissions, and no attempt has been made to give a comprehensive picture. However, it is hoped that the high points have been indicated and some idea given of the scope of the Federal Art Project in the Bay Area.

Art—A Revelation, Not an Argument

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all color theories are wrong when they are most right in their own assumptions. Nearly all efforts to rationalize color from the spectrum fail to take into account either sensibility to form as the basic approach of the artist or the fact that theory based on the mechanics of the spectrum applies only superficially to pigment; an important difference being that the primaries are not the same and that the primaries in light combined produce white, while the primaries of pigment combined produce black. My own observation is that the most perfect color theories have been propounded by people who are creatively sterile, and their most ardent exponents are people who are unsure. Color in the hands of the artist is pigment in search of form and emotional range.

Scale and movement of form is the plastic interpretation of space and time. All robust expression requires complete freedom in the exploration of these qualities, and in all robust periods of art they have been treated with great freedom. Decayed and impoverished periods have elaborated and applied precise rules limiting them. Their variation presents the most direct imaginative attack upon the plastic problem.

Perspective is one of the means by which movement and scale of form may be projected. It forms a part of visual pattern, and as such it is easily adapted in design. But theoretic perspective insistently applied is positively false in visual pattern. It almost inevitably destroys all unity of arabesque. It is one of the sacred cows of the academic tradition which persists because it is easier to teach a formula than to use intelligence and ingenuity in directing observation.

To go outside the field of performance, our appraisal of art is unsure. We are so much the victims of cult that we scarcely think of art as anything that we may enter into of our own will for sheer enjoyment and spiritual experience. We are so in the habit of believing that a work of art must be explained before we can comprehend or dare to admire. We have come to the viewpoint that the appreciation and understanding of art is acquired, not by going to it and exposing ourselves to it, but by reading a book or listening to a lecture. The truth is that if a man's sensibilities were alive by virtue of being used and cultivated, his own judgments are the only ones he should ever trust about a work of art.

We are so unsure that in our appraisal of work we do not dwell on the richness or fullness of a man's expression or whether his expression may be adequate at all. We dwell on the relatively unimportant matters of technique and method, and overlook triviality or emptiness in a work

Hesthal Wins Phelan Award

William J. Hesthal has recently been awarded the James D. Phelan Fellowship for outstanding achievement in art. The announcement was made by Dean Charles Lipman of the University of California, who headed the committee of selection, composed of Stafford Duncan, Spencer Macky and Frank Van Sloun.

Hesthal, who for many years has taken an active part in Art Association affairs as member of the Artists' Council, was winner of the 2nd Anne Bremer Memorial Prize in the Art Association's Annual of 1935. He is now engaged in the designing of a mosaic, a linear hymn to music, entitled "The Morning Star."

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The Picnic at Montalvo

On Sunday, May 3rd, all roads led to Montalvo, where the Art Association acted as host at a picnic for its members and their friends.

The terrace of the old Phelan home was set with tables to accommodate some of the guests, and the beautiful "tapis vert" was dotted with colorful picnic groups, with children moving through the pattern like giant butterflies. Hot coffee, that great common denominator, was served by the Art Association. The pool, like one enormous scintillating aquamarine, lured all who had the temerity to plunge into its cool depths.

The Festival of Music, presented by the Works Progress Administration, under the capable leadership of Ernst Bacon, added a spirit of Spring magic to the occasion. During the Mozart concerto for flute and orchestra, at least one listener felt, while lying upon the green carpet and watching the flicker of sunlight through the leaves of the trees overhead, that Pan, himself, was lurking there.

Everyone agreed that Montalvo was created as the perfect place to hold a picnic.—A. D. B.

if we can praise its manner of execution. Our exhibitions are buried under mannered trivialities.

Art is a revelation of something — always within our own possible range of experience—never an argument or a dissertation on something strange and outside of it. We seem to be afraid to look for the revelation. Its spiritual content of good or evil, of gayety or somberness, of delicacy or power, lies in the verities of form and movement revealed, and not in the method or cult to which it conforms, nor the argument which it may contain.

SAN FRANCISCO ART ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.
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May Exhibitions in Local Galleries

The Art Center, 730 Montgomery Street: Purchaser's Exhibition, April 27th to May 9th. Water-colors and drawings by George Harris, May 11th to May 23rd. Oil paintings by Merylyn Hardy, May 25th to June 6th.

Amberg-Hirth, 165 Post Street: Lunch sets woven by Eleanor Tebbetts. Ceramics by Glen Lukens. Metal Work by Tom Shaw.

California Palace of the Legion of Honor, Lincoln Park: Van Gogh Exhibition of Oils, Water-colors and Drawings, April 28th to May 29th.

Courvoisier Galleries, 480 Post Street: Exhibition of reproductions of paintings by Vincent Van Gogh.

M. H. deYoung Memorial Museum, Golden Gate Park: Rudolph Schaeffer Student's Exhibition opens May 9th. Work by adults and children of the Ruth Armer School of Practical Art Appreciation, to May 16th. Dry-points by Cadwallader Washburn, from the collection of Dr. Ludwig A. Emge, to May 13th. Persian Textile Exhibition from the 16th to the 19th century, through May 4th. Persian Art in facsimile color reproduction, through May 4th. Creative art from the elementary grades of the San Francisco public schools, to May 14th.

Paul Elder Gallery, 239 Post Street: Wood engravings by Donald Pitt, May 2nd to May 23rd.

S. and G. Gump Galleries, 246 Post Street: Special Exhibit of Paintings, May 1st to May 15th. California Society of Etchers, "Down Town Annual," May 15th to June 1st.

Oakland Art Gallery, Municipal Auditorium, Oakland, California: Paintings by James A. Holden. Water-colors, from the California Water-Color Society of Los Angeles.

San Francisco Museum of Art, War Memorial, Civic Center: Exhibitions—May 10th, Japanese prints and paintings; May 29th, opening of spring exhibition, survey of landscape painting from the primitives through the 19th century. Lithographs by Honoré Daumier through May.

S. F. Museum of Art Lectures

- May 10, Sunday Afternoon—Mrs. Martha Davidson, 3:00 p. m. Japanese prints and paintings.
May 13, Wednesday Evening—Mr. John Humphrey, 8:00 p. m. Daumier the print maker.
May 17, Sunday Afternoon—Mr. Charles Lindstrom, 3:00 p. m. General tour.
May 18, Monday Afternoon—Dr. G. L. McCann Morley, 3:00 p. m. Daumier.
May 20, Wednesday Evening—Mr. J. Leroy Davidson, 8:00 p. m. Japanese art.
May 24, Sunday Afternoon—Mrs. Martha Davidson, 3:00 p. m. Japanese exhibition.
May 25, Monday Afternoon—Dr. G. L. McCann Morley, 3:00 p. m. Survey of exhibitions.
May 27, Wednesday Evening—Dr. G. L. McCann Morley, 8:00 p. m. Introduction to the study of landscape painting.